



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



September 29, 2008

Reflect on the Past, Focus on the Future...Celebrating 233 years of Naval Heritage

"A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guaranty of peace."

– President Theodore Roosevelt

As we celebrate our [Navy's 233rd birthday](#) it is particularly relevant that we consider the influence the Great White Fleet deployment of 100 years ago had on our Navy's development. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt's statement to Congress comparing a Navy's relationship with peace is still valid today as "[A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower](#)" raises the prevention of war to a level equal to the conduct of war.

Our Heritage Has Shaped Today's Navy

The core capabilities of the Maritime Strategy can be seen in the accomplishments of the Great White Fleet:

- The historic deployment of the Great White Fleet 100 years ago sent a clear message: America is a respected world power, with a strong Navy leading the way. Today our Navy remains an essential element of U.S. power, deployed around the world 24/7, assuring friends, deterring potential adversaries, forging cooperative partnerships to maintain security at sea, and defending our country.
- The U.S. Navy did not sustain a forward presence in 1907, but President Roosevelt envisioned its value in diplomacy and international partnership. He sent a portion of the Atlantic Fleet on a world tour to test naval readiness, establish global presence, generate international goodwill, and garner enthusiasm for the U.S. Navy. Today, the assignment of USS George Washington (CVN 73) to the U.S. Navy's Forward Deployed Naval Forces demonstrates the U.S. commitment to peace and regional security through strengthened capabilities, as well as the U.S. Government's commitment to the defense of Japan.
- In early 1909 after a tidal wave hit Messina, Sicily, killing 200,000 people while the Great White Fleet was in Port Said, Egypt, Admiral Sperry dispatched [USS Connecticut \(BB 18\)](#) and [USS Illinois \(BB 7\)](#) to provide assistance and food. In September 2008, USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) provided more than 1,475 metric tons of relief supplies and 20,865 gallons of water to Haiti following powerful hurricanes that hit in quick succession. Additionally, embarked engineers and medical teams met with government agencies and non-governmental organizations to assess damage to roads and critical infrastructure and discuss medical assessments.

Looking to the Future

A great Navy cannot be built overnight and requires sustained support. Our fleet is strong because of the support of our Sailors, their families, the U.S. Congress, and the American public over the past 233 years. As the U.S. Navy **reflects on its past, we focus on the future**...committed to continuing our tradition formed in **100 years** of global partnerships and security executing the Maritime Strategy while promoting global peace and prosperity.

Key Messages

- The Navy remains an essential element of national power and maintaining a robust fleet is in the best interest of the United States.
- Today's high-quality, diverse force allows us to meet challenges today and remain a global Navy.
- The Maritime Strategy emphasizes the need for increased global cooperation with friends and allies to promote global peace and prosperity.
- Honoring the 100th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet deployment underscores our commitment to sustaining a Navy responsive to the challenges of the 21st century.

Facts & Figures

- Sailors from the Great White Fleet celebrated the Navy birthday while transiting from Manila, Philippine Islands to Yokohama, Japan.
- Great White Fleet deployed Dec. 16, 1907 to Feb. 22, 1909 with 14,000 Sailors on [16 ships](#) traveling 43,000 miles to 6 continents and 20 port calls.
- Unlike in 1908, at any given time the Navy has 41% of the fleet deployed.
- A typical Hampton Roads, Va., Carrier Strike Group deployment includes: 6 ships, about 7,300 Sailors and covers more than 43,000 miles.